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ABSTRACT

Although the number of minority students in U.S. schools continues to increase, the number of ethnically diverse teachers continues to decline. The multicultural classroom creates a demand for teachers who are aware of cultural differences within the student population. Minority teachers are in a unique position to understand these differences and to provide ethnic role models. Several factors contribute to the shortage of minority teachers, including the low retention rate of minority students attending college and difficulties in transferring from two- to four-year colleges. Because many instructors in community colleges are vocational teachers, recruitment of students into vocational education and vocational education teaching careers has great potential. Among suggested strategies to enhance recruitment of minorities are the following: develop candidate pools, promote vocational education in the schools, establish scholarships for minority students, recruit at community colleges, and seek candidates in business and industry. Efforts to retain minority teachers in vocational education should include institutional commitment to multicultural understanding and diversity. The following are among incentives for enriching teachers' multicultural understanding: learning a second language, living in the community, becoming involved in the community, and celebrating cultural events. (MN)

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Recruitment and Retention of Minority Teachers in Vocational Education

by Bettina A. Lankard

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Although the number of minority students in U.S. schools continues to increase, the number of ethnically diverse teachers is declining. By the year 2000, it is estimated that minority students will comprise 33 percent of the school population and that this percentage will grow to 39 percent by the year 2020 (Johnson 1991). The number of minority teachers, however, is expected to decline. The American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education has predicted that minority teachers will represent less that 5 percent of all U.S. teachers by the year 2000. Currently, minorities make up only 16 percent of all secondary vocational teachers, no more than 10 percent of the faculty in postsecondary institutions, and less than 10 percent of university faculty in industrial education (Martinez 1991). This *ERIC Digest* examines the need to bring more minorities into the teaching profession, explores issues related to recruiting and retaining minorities as vocational teachers, and identifies strategies to help diversify vocational teacher education.

The Need

The multicultural classroom, which is relatively new to the educational system, creates a demand for teachers who are aware of the cultural differences within the student population, "differences that affect learning styles, behavior, mannerisms, and relationships with school and home" (Skylarz 1993, p. 22). Students from ethnically and racially diverse backgrounds have the highest rates of poverty and the highest school dropout rates (Williams 1992). These students need the support of teachers from their cultures who have an understanding of cultural and family practices and behaviors and who can serve as role models for educational achievement and success. Martinez (1991) contends that the lack of minority teachers to provide ethnic role models in schools could "contribute to the underachievement of minority students, provide little incentive for minority students to advance in school, and negatively affect their career and life aspirations" (p. 24).

Several factors contribute to the shortage of minority teachers. One factor is the low retention rate of minority students attending college (Yopp et al. 1991). Minority students who do graduate are increasingly entering business and industry or health professions rather than education. For the large number of minority students who attend community colleges, the difficulty of transferring to a four-year institution also limits teaching as a career option. Community colleges enroll 43 percent of all the African-American and 55 percent of all the Hispanic undergraduates in the United States, but only a small percentage of these students transfer (ibid.). Because many of the instructors in community colleges are vocational teachers, recruitment of students into vocational education and vocational education teaching careers has great potential.

Recruitment Strategies

Martinez (1991) offers several strategies to enhance the recruitment of minorities:

1. **Develop candidate pools.** Teachers, counselors, and administrators in high schools, community colleges, technical schools, and universities can collaborate to identify pools of talented minority students to recruit for the vocational education teaching professions.

2. **Promote vocational education in the schools.** Various strategies should be used to promote postsecondary education to vocational education students. One technique would be to have a vocational career day where university educators come to high schools and area vocational schools to discuss teacher education programs, college entrance requirements, financial aid, and so forth.

3. **Establish scholarships for minority students.** Financial aid is of great importance to minority students as many of them come from economically disadvantaged backgrounds and cannot pursue education without support.

4. **Recruit at community colleges.** Community colleges and technical institutes should make vocational education foundation courses available and have articulation agreements with universities that will facilitate student transfers. Kent State University and Cuyahoga Community College, both in Ohio, have collaborated to develop the Teaching Leadership Consortium, which is designed to recruit outstanding minority teacher candidates from the community college setting into university teacher education programs.

5. **Look for candidates in business and industry.** A public service advertising campaign conducted by Recruiting New Teachers, Inc., Belmont, Massachusetts, successfully recruited potential teachers from a variety of areas, including some employed in business and industry (Harris 1993). About half of the individuals who responded to the campaign (29 percent of the respondents were minorities) said they had been considering the profession for some time and were prompted by the predominantly television-oriented advertising campaign.

Other strategies for recruiting minority individuals into a teacher preparation course of study emerged from California State University at Fullerton's Teacher Track Project (Yopp et al. 1991). This project targeted instructional aides and high school students for recruitment. Its efforts were influenced by the results of a needs assessment survey that identified three factors considered to be roadblocks to obtaining a teaching credential: expense, need to quit job to attend classes, and uncertainty about where

to get help in selecting appropriate coursework. Project activities offered in response to these needs, represent effective recruitment practices: "the use of role models, the establishment of mentoring relationships between university faculty and community college students, the establishment of peer groups, the availability of financial aid incentives, and the distribution of promotional materials which reflect diversity" (p. 38). Support offered by the local school districts and the ongoing participation of university and community college faculty were mentioned as integral to the success of the project.

To enhance recruitment, Martinez (1991) suggests that minorities be included in all phases and at all levels of the recruitment process and that personal contact with students be emphasized:

- Vocational teachers could serve as mentors for their minority students.
- Colleges and universities can establish alternative vocational teacher, administrator, and counselor certification programs with flexible admissions policies for minorities with degrees who come to the education field from business and industry.
- School districts can pay for relocation expenses and housing assistance for minority vocational teachers, offer jobs to minority vocational student teachers, and encourage minority paraprofessionals and teachers to complete courses and obtain necessary certifications and degrees.
- Professional organizations can advance more minorities to organizational leadership positions and promote the idea of vocational education careers.

Retention Strategies

Efforts to retain minority teachers in vocational education should include institutional commitment to multicultural understanding and diversity. The Penn State Center for Minority Graduate Opportunities and Faculty Development has two offices to promote and support minority students and faculty: the Office for Minority Graduate Opportunities and the Office for Minority Faculty Development (Atwater and Lyons 1993). Mentoring, role modeling, peer guidance, review, and counseling are among methods used to enhance the intellectual and personal growth of Penn State's minority faculty. As another retention strategy, the Penn State Center offers a series of faculty development workshops, a number of networking and mentoring opportunities, and supplemental financial support for professional activities and research opportunities.

Commitment to Multicultural Education

Staff training in issues of cultural diversity can be a powerful strategy for recruiting and retaining minority teachers in vocational education. It not only enhances overall teacher effectiveness, but can serve to draw minority teachers to the institution by reflecting a commitment to multicultural education.

Skylarz (1993) presents several strategies for enriching teachers' multicultural understanding and suggests several incentives for drawing them to those practices:

Learning a second language. Teachers will realize a benefit and sense of satisfaction through improved communication within the classroom, with other faculty (some of whom will be minority teachers), and with parents.

Living in the community. A better understanding of the school's population is possible when teachers live in the community in which they teach.

Becoming involved in the community. An awareness of community events and participation in some of them can help teachers develop greater understanding of the community's culture(s).

Celebrating cultural events. With knowledge of the cultural backgrounds of the school population, teachers can work together to organize cultural events or celebrations for the classroom.

Successful recruitment and retention of minority teachers requires a cultural transformation within the institution. Faculty diversity need to be seen as crucial to the multicultural school environment. As noted by Skylarz (1993), "Multicultural understanding will require much more than a plan. It will require people working together, joining hands and sharing in a collaborative effort unlike anything we have seen in public education" (Skylarz 1993, p. 22). Such an effort is necessary to help diversify vocational teacher education.

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